

# The Hartford Seminary Foundation

## BULLETIN

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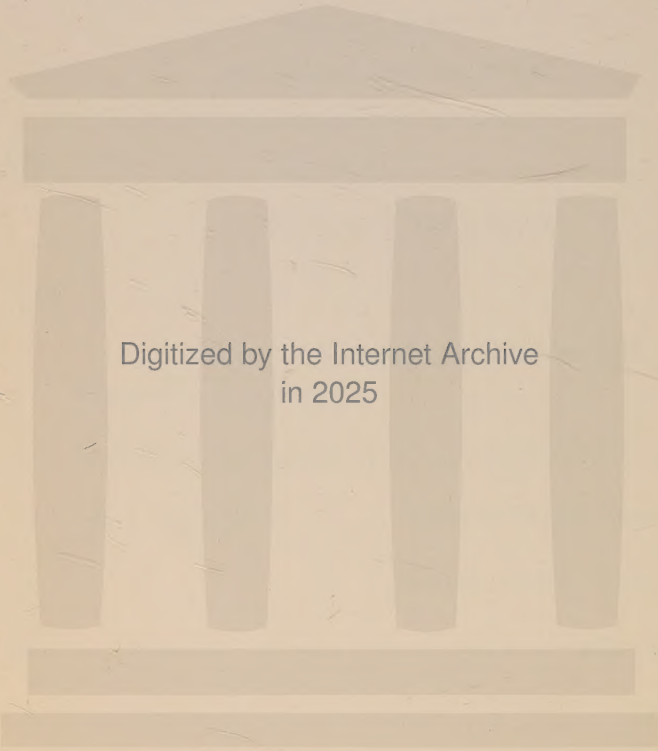
Number 3

June, 1947

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ROCKWELL HARMON POTTER, PREACHER  
*or*  
SOME INADEQUATE REMARKS ON A MOST  
ADEQUATE SUBJECT<sup>1</sup>

FREDERICK H. THOMPSON, PORTLAND, MAINE

ONE of the forgotten groups of great people are they who when appointed by a church or parish to seek a new minister take seriously and prayerfully to their work. After reading carefully the two or three hundred letters they receive and paying sufficient homage to the bishops of the denominations who have just the man for the place, they proceed to be truly Congregational and go off on their own, to seek, perchance to find, a new Messiah, or at least another St. Paul, for their church. We must add in passing that these zealous searchers sometimes end up by bringing home the human counterpart of that particular stock for which Saul, the son of Kish, was so assiduously seeking, rather than the one who will bring the desired Kingdom of God.

But that committee of blessed memory which went out from Center Church, Hartford, in the year of our Lord 1900, was made up of men who knew what they wanted. Hartford was in the stages of becoming the insurance capital of America. Young people were converging on the city fresh from colleges and training schools. Center Church was in a desirable position to serve and possibly save them. The man they wanted had to be young and brilliant and above all a good preacher. They did not particularly care whether he was handsome or not.

There were those in Center Church who were still in the deep slumber of the very decided opinion that Center Church was the hub of the Congregational universe. This

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<sup>1</sup> Delivered at the banquet given by the Alumni in honor of Dean Potter on December 4, 1946, at Center Church, Hartford.



was an opinion to which some of their ancestors had been partial ever since they had followed Thomas Hooker on his hegira from the Massachusetts Colony, and which, like many another opinion they brought at that time, had not changed up to A. D. one thousand nine hundred. Accordingly, they wanted a man worthy of this great tradition to be their minister. When word finally leaked out that this committee of the great Center Church of Hartford was holding conversation with a ruddy-cheeked Dutch lad, aged twenty-six, who was serving a church in a dubious little place called Flushing, there was deep concern in the heart of matron and, we may say, maid, for the first rumor had it that he was not married. The members of the D. A. R. and the Mayflower Descendants, on looking up his pedigree, made the dismal discovery that he was not a descendant of the House of William the Silent. (Far from it, as they were to learn later.) He was in fact three-fourths New England and only one-fourth Dutch.

By one o'clock on the Sabbath of Mr. Potter's first sermon at Center Church, the genealogies were all put away and the Bibles were brought out. For the young lad with the ruddy cheeks had won a complete victory. Although there was some disappointment in finding that he already did have a wife, there was no disappointment when word came that he would heed the call of the Lord and straightway make his journey to Hartford as soon as it was in order for him to leave Flushing without blushing, for he had been there only two years.

So began a long and fruitful ministry, stretching over twenty-eight years, in which time this young man won over not only the people of Center Church, but the people of Hartford and Connecticut, and of Congregationalism generally, through his presidencies of the Home Board and the American Board, his moderatorship of the General Council, and his service as Dean of this Seminary.

What recognition was given to that committee sent

out to seek a new pastor we never did hear. That their report was accepted and placed on file is the usual proceeding in such a case. Their names should be writ large wherever they are recorded, for they have done us all a great service. To quote Churchill's oft repeated phrase again, "Never . . . was so much owed by so many to so few." The work and the good they did lives long after them in the life and work of that lad from Flushing who has dwelt among us this near half a century.

In preparing these remarks it was necessary to spend some time in reading over the sermons of Dr. Potter which were printed from time to time at Center Church during his ministry there. These extend over nearly a quarter of a century. The amazing thing about these sermons is the fact that they could be preached today. They are not dated by either content or style. They symbolize the eternal Word, the unchanging gospel. One cannot judge a picture or a book justly until ten years after it appears. The same rule applies to a sermon. If its appeal is to the eternal soul, it must speak in words which are timeless. These sermons of Dr. Potter stand that test.

One of the reasons for their lasting worth is their basis in Scripture. They do not propose to solve the political problems of the city or state or nation, nor the social problem, nor do they enter into the shoals of theological argumentation. They would be obsolete long before this if they did. They simply present the Word of God as found in the Old and New Testaments and seek to interpret it as guidance for effective every day living.

Again a common quality of these sermons is that they proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ. They do not waste time defending particular positions or points of view, they simply and effectively state the Christian view of God and Christ and man and how worthy this view is of our acceptance. No trumpeting of uncertain sound here, but a clear call for the renewing of our life and mind through the



power of the Lord Jesus. Another quality which one does not miss is their simplicity and lack of adornment. There is nothing there but the chaste, unadorned presentation of the eternal things of the spirit: faith, love, hope, trust, God, and the living Christ. But with this material what cathedrals are built in which the soul may take shelter and find courage to take up the struggle again!

Fine as it is to read through Dr. Potter's sermons, one soon discovers that he is listening to the words as if their author were preaching them. He finds it difficult to separate the sermon from the preacher. For once having heard Dr. Potter preach, one would never again be satisfied with merely reading his sermons. He is an indispensable part of his creation. Like George Whitefield, Thomas Chalmers, and other great pulpit orators, Dr. Potter's sermons are their best when he is delivering them before a congregation. Then his words leap and run to do his bidding. On the printed page the fire is still there, but it is a glow rather than a blaze.

It is this writer's humble opinion that Dr. Potter's great contribution to the life of his times has been that of a great Christian preacher. His voice is mightier than his pen. One can ask for no grander experience in worship than to hear Dr. Potter take one of the great themes of the Bible and develop it. And like the artist he is, he needs his time in its development. He loves to begin a sermon but he hates to finish it, hates to let it go before the last vestige of good there is in it is squeezed out.

Is there a greater pulpit dramatist than Dr. Potter? Is there one who can seize the difficulties of the moment and by the magic which is his, change them quickly into golden opportunities? Some there are who recall the ordination service of one of the Seminary students in the church at Bolton, Connecticut. Time came for the ordination sermon. As is usual on such occasions, Dr. Potter reads the Scripture passage from which his text is taken. The Doctor was

reading of that experience of John the Baptist when the soldiers came to him and said, "What must we do?" Just when the lights went out and the church was plunged in darkness. In the stillness that followed the Doctor thundered, "I do not need a light to read John's answer. The words are written in living fire." Then he proceeded to quote the rest of the passage from memory and preach such a sermon that people were not conscious of the outer darkness, for there was an inner glow which was given to those listeners which made externals unimportant.

Is the generation of pulpit orators a passing generation? It would seem so here in the North at least. And with the passing goes a quality from our preaching which our logical pulpit argumentation can never replace. Those men of that great school brought something thrilling with them wherever they preached. One never knew what God would put into their mouths. People were standing on the edge of great revelations. It has been suggested that some of the preachers were possessed with a certain madness, when they preached, like unto David dancing before the Ark and singing praises. But if it be madness, as Chesterton puts it, it is a madness older than any sanity. In the mind of a Whitefield, a Chalmers, a Spurgeon, and a Potter that madness could sway and move the spirits of a listening people like a breeze sweeps and bends the moor grass. For there in that brief moment when a soul in touch with a great presence becomes a voice, those listening people are made aware of a world to which they do not belong; they are stabbed with a great sense of loss and loneliness. Like the busy folk in the parable, they too had once been invited to a great feast and had turned it down for the commonplace tasks of testing a pair of oxen or looking over a field. And the invitation never came again. Now the oxen are dead and the field has been sold, and like men who exchanged gold for tinsel, they realize that what they thought was wealth was only dust.



So they come for help to their long-forgotten shrine and the voice of the preacher stirs an old hunger which has never been satisfied, though they have had many banquets. It will never be satisfied until they stand before the great white throne and cry, "I believe, help thou my unbelief." And more than any other, it is the preacher who brings them there.

We have to get that soul-saving quality back into our preaching again, for men are finding that they are spirits as well as bodies and minds and the spirit needs to be ministered to. They are turning to psychiatrists and psychologists and counselors when all the while the preacher holds the secret for them. But our modern trumpet makes an uncertain sound. We are afraid to preach whole truths and nothing else will ever satisfy. In the eighteenth century if a man was a believer he was sure of heaven and that sustained him. If he was an unbeliever he was sure of hell and that troubled him. Religion always had to be reckoned with. As modernists in religion we have thrown heaven and hell out the window. And what we have thrown out, the psychologists have picked up, changed the labels a bit and are using with effectiveness. But man is a creature of heaven and hell. He will not have it taken from him. It upsets the balance of life. Call it being lost or found, saved or unsaved, integrated or unintegrated, adjusted or unadjusted—every school has its own name—man is a creature of heaven and hell. These great preachers knew it and made man aware of it and told them how they could be saved. They were preachers of the Word, the Word that was made flesh, and they made it dwell among us. Of this group is Dr. Potter, one of the great pulpit orators of our day. There are few of us who have heard Spurgeon or Chalmers or any of the great evangelical pulpit orators of a previous day. But we have heard and had Rockwell Harmon Potter and there is glory enough in that to carry us through.



Now in holding to the fact that Dr. Potter's great contribution to his day is in the realm of preaching, presenting the living Word of God to men, there was no intention of minimizing the quality of his writing. Some of the passages from his sermons soar aloft in their own right without benefit of the power of voice. In a powerful sermon on "Our Knowledge of God" he concludes:

Do we know whom we worship? We called upon him as we entered the House of Meeting. We adore him in the ascription of our praises. We invoke him in the humility of our prayer. We worship him in our common meditation. Do we know him whom we worship? Do we know that he is great, that he is spirit, that he is holy, that he is love? If this meeting house were a Mohammedan Mosque, from its steeple at morning, and at noon, and at night would go out the cry over the busy throng of the old street, hurrying in the morning on business, sauntering at nightfall on pleasure—over them all the cry would go forth, "There is no God but God. There is no God but God." But this is a meeting house of a Christian Church, and there is no one crying from its steeple. But there ought to be hundreds going forth every Lord's day from its threshold, who by the words they speak, by the deeds they do, by the lives they live, ought to be proclaiming the Christian's creed far more effectively than any crier could from the steeple, ought to be saying to these hurrying throngs, "We know whom we worship."

Perhaps one of the most powerful bits of descriptive writing to come from his pen is the record of his trip to the Near East and his visit to the Cilician gates. He writes:

At its narrowest point we stopped and opened our baskets for a picnic lunch. There was just room enough between the cliff wall, on the south and on the north, to park the Ford beside the old highway, and to see the stream which runs beside it, beating its way down over the rocks and stones and pebbles of its bed. Right in the midst of the stream lay a great boulder that in prehistoric times had tumbled down from the cliff. One side of it is smooth and there in uncial Greek characters were the inscriptions of conquerors who had passed that way. I could not read them, for time has done its work upon them, and the uncial characters are not familiar to one who has difficulty in reading the Lord's Prayer in the Westcott and

Hort Edition of the New Testament. But I knew that Darius put an inscription there, and Xerxes put one there, as they led the hordes of the East up through the Taurus Mountains, along that narrow road, to threaten the West. And Xenophon put an inscription there, when he led his 10,000 Greeks down from the West to the East through that pass. And Alexander put an inscription there when he led his hosts on his way toward destiny and doom and death along that same road. As we sat, the centuries rolled away and we saw the hordes marching, marching, marching from East to West, and from West to East, through the Cilician Gates.

Then I looked eastward down to the turn in the road and around it came two men, no more, sturdy, tramping with their staffs, one stooped perhaps, shortsighted, may be bandy-legged. So these two figures came and passed us, but there was a light in their eyes as they went on toward the West, and I knew they were Paul and Silas, making their way from Syria and Cilicia up to Iconium and Derbe and Lystra, and Troas and Macedonia and Athens and Rome. And it seemed to me that the two made the mightiest army that ever passed through the Cilician Gates.

In a sermon on "Triumphant Religion" he brings the triumph and the uplift of the Christian faith to a humble Sunday School teacher whose life was bound to a homely task within the narrow walls of a little home.

She tended with unfailing patience the daily wants of an invalid father and prostrate mother. She had all the cares imposed by a meager livelihood, her back was bowed, her hair silvered, but she was a Christian. She knew her Lord and by his spirit she was renewed day by day for her tasks, which became labors of love.

How many of our churches have such souls! But how many ministers enter into their experiences or from their lives draw forth the preaching value that is more effective by far than all our quoted poetry or bookish illustration?

Time after time in sermon after sermon one comes across these intimate glimpses into some family situation so that you know that he who spoke sat where they sat and their trouble and sorrow had become part of him. A recent writer speaks of an archer shooting into the sky an arrow at God. When the arrow fell to earth its point

was tipped with blood. This kindly, understanding, pastor-preacher roamed constantly among his large flock. He knew their suffering, their need, their sorrow, and each experience drew blood from his large heart. He forgot them not in the quietness of his prayer chamber nor in his preaching. And, Oh! the uplift that came to them through his ministry!

Living in a time when the social gospel was a force which was of greater importance than any other aspect of Christian preaching, we find Dr. Potter giving recognition to the opportunities in this field, but he remained still an evangelical preacher of the Word.

G. K. Chesterton in his life of the English painter, George Frederick Watts, speaks of a curious secret strength which kept Watts independent as a painter in his youth, and kept him independent through the great roaring triumph of the Pre-Raphaelites and the great roaring triumph of the Impressionists, gazing, but not copying.

So remained Dr. Potter through all the fads and fancies which pull ministers this way and that. He remained independent, knowing that come what may it was the saving gospel of Christ to which all men would return in the evening of life.

But having said that, we must hasten on lest you think he remained aloof and untouched by the conditions of life in the city, state, or nation. He has been in an almost titanic rage at the stupidity of our Congress when it passed the Oriental Exclusion Act. Ways leading to peace and disarmament were his constant concern. In 1911 he pleads for a lowering of the fifty-eight hour labor law for women and for the establishment of a minimum wage law. He gives warning to the police and Mayor of the city of Hartford that they must be more vigilant in their care of the young women coming to live in Hartford and provide the protection necessary for their safety. He calls upon the people of Center Church to give themselves more largely and



graciously in providing friendship and hospitality to those who are alone in the city and in need of Christian friendship. His large, generous ear was always turned to the heart throb of the people. Where there was need, and wrongs to be righted, there would usually be found Dr. Potter doing something about it.

One of the services which Dr. Potter in his later years has done the parish ministers is to show them the value of preaching a sermon over again and again. To his mind a sermon well-worth preaching once is worth preaching many times. The average pastor has been somewhat reluctant to repeat a sermon and does so with misgivings. Not so Dr. Potter, and he stands in a good tradition. Dr. Thomas Chalmers of Edinburgh, though a great preacher, had few sermons. Those he had he preached over and over again. On one occasion he felt quite uncomfortable, for he saw a man in the congregation who was hearing his sermon for the fourth time. The great French preachers, Dean Ramsay writes—Massilon, Bossuet, and Bourdaloue—were best known for a particular great sermon on a particular subject. People would crowd to the cathedral to hear these sermons year after year just as people would go to the same opera or the same play year after year.

The fate of the preacher is that his words are often forgotten after the passage of hours. Some may have their sermons printed in books to give them a further day, but even in book-form they exist in a sort of suspended animation; their inevitable fate is either the second hand book store, or the library of the impecunious theological student when the preacher's children or grandchildren arrive to modernize the old homestead. If the preacher has a message of salvation through Christ for his generation, he needs to repeat it again and again. He must never cease doing so. The time is short, the need is great, and after all the message is really only one. A man may take a lifetime in preparing it. It is the outpouring of his whole

being. In the realm of religion it may be as great a masterpiece as is *Hamlet* in the realm of drama or *In Memoriam* in the realm of poetry. The great sermon is a work of time and he who would create a great sermon must first live one. He must see many fads and fancies rise and pass away. He may even be part of them. But they are the minor themes of his symphony. They but introduce, prepare the way, for the great motif, which repeats and repeats itself until, while banners fly and armor gleams, it rises to exultant ecstasy, and the memory and regard for all else is lost in the grandeur of its triumph.

Preach the great revelation of God through Christ once and then tuck it away to die in obscurity? Nay, preach it again and again! Life has depths which can not be fathomed at one sounding. There are still wide spaces where the light has not lighted up the darkness, where the Word has not yet dwelt among us full of grace and truth.

Robert Frost has said that when we read a great poem we know that we have taken an "immortal wound." How much more true is this of hearing a great sermon! For there we are dealing with that which has such power of penetration as to reach the very soul and stab it awake and hurt it so that it will never be content to slumber again. And we are of the order of those who are called upon to make immortal wounds in the souls of men, to drive the quivering lancets of faith to their mark, for only when men are so wounded can they ever be aware of the One who came to save and to heal. We need to preach that word which wounds again and again. To the man who has shown us this divine economy, this rigid stratum in a fluid atmosphere, as one of the Scottish preachers calls it, we stand in constant debt.

It is not out of place at this time to suggest how a sermon should take over the soul of a man. Ministers are so busy preparing sermons that they sometimes forget what the function and purpose of the sermon are. Willa

Cather throws light on the whole problem in a letter which explains her reason for including the isolated story of Tom Outland in her novel, *The Professor's House*; how she hoped it would bring to the professor's cluttered domestic world the expansive clarity it needed.

Just before I began the book, she writes, I had seen in Paris an exhibition of old and modern Dutch paintings. In many of them, the scene presented was a living room warmly furnished or a kitchen full of food and copper. But in most of the interiors, whether drawing room or kitchen, there was a square window; open; through which one saw the masts of ships or a stretch of grey sea. The feeling of the sea that one got through those square windows was remarkable, and gave one a sense of the Dutch ships which ply on all waters of the globe to Dutch Borneo, Java, Sumatra. In my book, she continues, I tried to make Professor St. Peter's house rather over-crowded and stuffy with new things, American properties, clothes, furs, petty ambitions, quivering jealousies—until one got rather stifled. Then I wanted the square window to let in the fresh air that blew off the great Blue Mesa, and the fine disregard for trivialities which was in Tom Outland's face and in his behavior.

And the sermon should be like that in its purpose: to open the windows of these quietly desperate lives of perplexed and needy people so they can see something greater than the four walls which hem them in, the tedious job which makes them slaves, the unending passage of unproductive days, the tread-mill type of existence which robs the soul of its force and vigor. The purpose of a sermon is to open the windows of the soul, to let in the fresh, invigorating air of God's wide world; to let in the power and glory of the risen Christ; to let in the procession of the disciples and the apostles and the fathers, let in the written word, the spoken word, the singing word; to let in the power of glory and the witness of the ages of men who fought lions, endured shipwreck, received the lash, were persecuted, dead, and buried, and who yet triumphed in the power and glory of the Christ Who came to seed and to save; yes, to let the witnesses in on Sunday morning.



ll of them, to let them speak with a great voice of that which they know and believe and trust.

That has been Rockwell Harmon Potter's great program during these almost fifty years as a minister of Christ. He never forgot the purpose of the sermon. And what a witness his has been! In nearly every town, village, and hamlet in the United States where stands a white-spired Congregational meeting house, he has let the witnesses in. Across this wide land has he traveled letting the witnesses in. Across the seas and oceans has he roamed, letting the witnesses in. The world has been his parish. He rejoiced to accept each invitation to preach that he could, and according to one who knows him best, if the invitations did not come fast enough, he would use various means to accelerate their pace that he might constantly be at the work of what James Stewart calls being the "Herald of God."

And what more shall we say? Shall we tell of his humor? Indeed not! There is none who can do full justice to that divine and audacious gift as it is so effectively used by him.

Shall we tell of his large capacity for friendship in whose large heart he holds us all, never to let us go or forget our names?

Shall we tell of his powers of worship, when the great organ of his voice ascends to heaven in Scripture, prayer, or song, and we are made aware we are standing in the presence of One Who is closer than breathing and nearer than hands and feet?

Shall we speak of his years of leadership on the great mission boards of our Church and as our leader in the National Council? Or of the faithful years of deanship when he guided the Seminary through a depression to greater glory?

These all await the scholar and biographer and the passage of time, for we are too close and too near now to

evaluate them properly. In distant years ahead many a one will burnish the halo which we now see but dimly, because our eyes are holden.

And so, Dr. Potter, we as Alumni of Hartford Seminary Foundation can only thus poorly salute you on this day which means so much to us. We hail you as the object of our admiration as a man; we hail you as the object of our reverence as a preacher; we hail you as the object of our love and devotion, as a friend and counsellor and Father in Israel. God bless you!

# CHARGE TO THE GRADUATING CLASS

May 21, 1947

RUSSELL HENRY STAFFORD

## TAKE COURAGE

*"In the world ye have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."*

*St. John, 16:33b*

**I**T takes courage to live. It does not take courage simply to exist; that is, to drift down the years. All one needs for that is a spineless yielding to whatever happens. But to live is more than to exist. It is to drive up the slope of a steep purpose, toward a goal of achievement. That takes skill, persistence, and a masterfully directed attention; but above all it takes courage. For pushing up a steep slope is not easy.

This is fitting counsel for me, as the spokesman of the teachers in this Foundation, to give to the students now being graduated out of our halls of preparation into the tasks for which these terms of toil have been getting them ready. A farewell address which lacked this advice would fall short of seriousness and realism.

If I were only the spokesman of these teachers, if they and I were not spokesmen for one who understands life better than by ourselves we ever could, I could do no more than to admonish you, as I have just done, that it takes courage to live. But as a prophet, however unworthy, of God incarnate in Our Blessed Lord Jesus Christ, I can do better than that. I can echo the farewell address which the Fourth Gospel tells us that he made to his disciples on the eve of his parting from them. For what he said to them he says also to us. There is a timeless pertinence in his words, as he himself is timeless who is forever one with God. And his counsel goes beyond telling us to take



courage. It tells us how to take it. It gives us the principle from which true courage flows in a crystal refreshing stream, submerging all boulders of untoward event.

It is true that the Fourth Gospel is of later date than the three others. Many of the sayings which it puts on Jesus' lips may not have been uttered by Mary's Son before he died. That is perhaps the case with the great discourse in chapters 13 through 16 of St. John's Gospel from which the watchword I offer you is drawn. Nevertheless these are real words of Christ. You will find them so if you will live with these chapters when the world is going hard with you and you are in danger of losing your vision, weakening your hold, and missing your mark. To be sure, there is much in them which bespeaks a type and development of thinking beyond what would be natural for a rabbi in first century Palestine. Yet this development is a natural one, from root ideas which challenge us in the earlier Gospels; and the type is harmonious with the man we meet there. The spirit in these chapters satisfies the double test, that it is the same spirit we find in the Gospels of St. Matthew, St. Mark, and St. Luke, and that it conforms to the normal experience of Jesus' followers from that time to this. If Jesus perchance did not actually speak these words, yet he felt what they mean, and they render fairly what he means to us.

"Be of good cheer," he says to his disciples, as they confront ventures and strains as yet unknown and in their details unimaginable. That is an English rendering faithful to the overtone of the brisk imperative Our Lord used; but "Take courage" is a more literal translation. "Take courage; I have overcome the world." Note that this claim is made before the Cross and the Resurrection. It would seem that what occurred on Calvary and in its shining sequel was but the manifestation in time and space of what beyond time and space is always true. Theologians who insist upon God in history, as if history were all, and apart

from the swift stream of episodes on earth God could neither know nor be known, should take note. Whatever the Hebrew concept may have been before Christ in this regard, it was not so that the early Christians understood their Lord and his gospel. It is not the Fourth Gospel only which introduces this amplification of our outlook. It is impossible to think through what the Sermon on the Mount means, as Jesus' characteristic sayings have there been woven into one discourse, in St. Matthew's Gospel, saturated as it is in Hebrew presuppositions, without emerging beyond time and space into an awareness of the eternal which is like opening one's eyes on light and colour after blindness. The temporal has its importance. But beyond the temporal, and enfolding it, is the eternal, in which before all ages Christ has overcome and God is sovereign.

"I have overcome the world." "The world" is used figuratively in the New Testament in two different senses. The more familiar is that in which it appears usually in St. Paul's epistles, where it stands neither for nature nor for human society in the abstract, but for the complex of the average habit—patterns of average men behaving on average motives of self-interest, "and the devil take the hindmost." St. Paul was no enemy of mankind; but he was the sworn enemy of unrestricted competition for gain, if we may employ so modern a phrase for so ancient an evil as organized unkindness. That is the world which Christians must renounce, along with the flesh and the devil; all three stand for the same thing. It is not the world which Christ declares that he has overcome. Or, rather, it is only one aspect of it.

Throughout the Johannine farewell discourse there is a recurring contrast between "the world" and "the Father." "I am in the Father and the Father in me." "I leave the world, and go unto the Father." "The Father" means, it would seem, not God only, but in God His realm, wherein His will is done. God and heaven are one and the same,

as the Chinese sages tell us too. One recalls the sentence of prayer recorded by St. Matthew, "Thy will be done as in heaven, so on earth," and St. Paul's word at Athens, "In him we live, and move, and have our being"; and, most poignantly, Our Lord's inexhaustibly suggestive declaration, as St. Luke reports it, concerning man's endless and, as it were, natural life independently of the physical body: "He is not the God of the dead, but of the living: for all live unto him."

If we were to put this into philosophical language we might state this contrast as a dualism of the time-space world and eternity, or the Everlasting Now. These are the two realms in which all men on earth live simultaneously. The one is represented by things and sensations; the other by values or meanings, going beyond any given things or sensations, and ranging all the way from a simple arithmetical proposition, which is forever true, to the ecstasy of a poet or the rapture of a saint, rising into conscious communion with the ineffable.

That these two realms are always with us, it would be hard for anyone to deny effectually. The central problem of every philosophy and every theology is to relate the one to the other. When one is formally denied, that is, explained in terms of the other, as radical materialism explains thought as an affluvia of things, and radical idealism explains things as objectifications of ideas, still the realm denied is affirmed in the very denial, at least as an element of experience requiring to be explained.

The Christian faith accepts both these realms. But it implies, even when its proponents do not specifically assert, that the world of time and space is contained within the world called God or heaven, the eternal or spiritual world; and that time-space with all its vicissitudes is one limited phase of a total process which is already present complete in the mind and being of God, in all-embracing perfection and simultaneity. It does not suggest that this phase of



process, to which our normal consciousness is confined, can be changed within its own bounds, simply by taking thought of God and His eternal Kingdom, in which our experience on earth is enveloped. We are not bidden to work miracles like a Wellsian hero, in order to get out of our troubles. What we are bidden to do is to discount our troubles even while we suffer them, by realizing that in that very moment we are also safe in God's care; that we shall still be with Him, when they are overpast; and that in the fulness of our experience, under His guidance, we shall come out at last into entire awareness of His Kingdom and glory and all-sufficing goodness.

To enter with vital conviction into this consciousness that God is here and all is well, even while we cannot see or feel Him and all seems ill, is that experience which in the Fourth Gospel is emphasized as "eternal life," beginning here and now. "This is life eternal, that they should know thee the only true God." And the fulfilment to which we look forward after our earthly pilgrimage is that of seeing the whole realm of being as God and His angels and saints now see it, in its satisfying rightness and radiance. We shall then look through God's eyes, as it were, in what the Christian mystics call the beatific vision; but steadily at last, no more in flashing glimpses only.

Meanwhile, however, we are on earth, in time-space; with work to do, and years to spend in doing it. We will not be content merely to exist; as followers of Jesus we must live, in the sharp sense of that urgent verb. We must drive up the slope of purpose toward the goal he has set for us. We must carry on his work in the world. What have we to expect?

He is honest with us. "In the world," says he, "ye have tribulation." That is a picturesque word, which adds a sharp contour to the general notion of trouble or difficulty. The English word "tribulation" comes from a Latin root meaning "to pound" or "to grind." It suggests pounding

away at the daily grind. But it is employed to translate a Greek word from a verb meaning "to pinch." We shall be in many a tight pinch. If that does not say very much to you now, it will ten years from now, as you look backward, and then look forward with anticipation disciplined by experience.

The work we have to do for Christ is the most interesting work on earth. For we are to be engaged in Church-centered vocations. It is not bigotry but history to say that the Church is the mother of civilization, in every good sense of that term. The Church, for all its shortcomings, remains the central powerhouse of sound social motivation. The growing edge of the Church, both in geographical extension and in social experiment, is the growing edge of a decent public order. And only through the message which the Church is charged to deliver to all men can any man find that exuberance of better living from within outward, that eternal quality in personal life, which comes from knowing God in Christ. The only kind of trouble we shall never have in a thrilling enterprise like this is boredom. If we ever have a dull moment, it will be when we are slacking, not when we are putting ourselves into our absorbing task.

But that does not mean that we shall have an easy time. In the first place, the techniques of human relations which we must practice are complicated and exacting. Further, we shall find most of our stations of service understaffed. By any business standard there will be too many things and too many kinds of things for us to do every day. Moreover, the essence of our business is to tell people what they don't want to hear, to teach them a way of living which they don't want to learn, and make them like it.

In consequence, we shall have very few friends where we work. We shall have many acquaintances, and probably most of them will be polite and even superficially cordial; but there will not be many among them to whom without

indiscretion we can unburden ourselves and expose our problems. In many quarters we shall be held at a distance and put on a shelf, under show of deference. For we represent the serious side of life; and most people are afraid of being serious. This will happen in close proportion to our fidelity to the sacred responsibility we bear. If most people on slight acquaintance are hail-fellow-well-met with you, that is a warning to be heeded as to your own character. The Christian ministry and its allied professions are the loneliest occupations in the world.

To be sure, there are many compensations. I have painted a gloomier picture than my own experience of many years in the pastorate would warrant. I have been thoroughly happy in my work, as a whole. Yet I know the drawbacks and handicaps which such work entails. And I have seen in others, through no fault of theirs, more of them than have ever come my way. It is only fair to warn you. And there is the best of precedents. "In the world ye shall have tribulation," said Our Lord to the men whom he was graduating from his seminar into their lifework.

But what of it? No one ever has an easy time if he insists on living instead of just existing. Tribulation is the price we have to pay for vitality; and it is worth the price. That is true, no matter what a man chooses to do. We have this advantage, that we are called to the most interesting work in the world, and the most important. When trouble comes in our private lives, we can always get on with our work and forget ourselves in it. When trouble comes in and through our work, we can always come through the trouble into better work beyond, with larger competence. We learn by our mistakes, and mount upon reverses toward higher achievement, unless our nerve is broken. And events can never do that to us. Only we can do it to ourselves.

"Be of good cheer: take courage!" There is subtle wisdom in Jesus' choice here of an imperative instead of a future tense. If he had said, "Ye will be of good

cheer," predicting that as an inevitable outcome of faith we should never fail in nerve, he might have misled us. Even he cannot predict what we will do. That is up to us. Many a man has taken courage simply by making up his mind that he would take it, plucking it out of the air if need were, because he could stand anything on the outside better than cowardice on the inside. Christ's victory will never give us the cheerful determination we require, unless we so resolve. That resolution, even apart from all reason for it, is in itself our initial act of faith. "I will not be afraid! I will stand up to whatever comes, and it shall not get me down! I can take it!" It is for the sake of such heroism, not only in soldiers under fire but also in workmen at the daily grind, that God has given us wills.

But what a reason we have for courage and cheer! "I have overcome the world." In that magnificent perfect tense of action completed lies our introduction, if we will have it, to the Father and to the eternal Kingdom of God, one with its King; the Everlasting Now, in which even today, under clouds or in sunshine on earth, we live and move and have our endless being.

It is in cultivating by choice the consciousness of that spiritual world in which all men live, though most men turn their eyes away from it, that the secret lies of endless valour and buoyancy and zest.

The secret of such cultivation in turn lies in our prayer life. We can do nothing without prayer. We can do all things in the measure God asks them of us, if we pray; that is, while we habitually think of God in Christ, to realize His presence, to talk to Him as to the friend of our bosom, and to draw reassurance and strength from His comradeship.

What you will do in life, no man can foresee. But along with some glorious ups there will be some dismal downs. That does not matter. You will come through. "In the world ye have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."



## THE SEMINARY DEAN'S REPORT

TERTIUS VAN DYKE

An article by C. Robert Avery, Jr., of the Middle Class, submitted in the course, "Christian World Action," will appear in the July, 1947, issue of *The Moslem World*, a quarterly published at the Hartford Seminary Foundation (copies available from the Book Room at fifty cents). The article is entitled "Muslim Life in Turkey Today."

Twenty-two members of the Senior Class received their B.D.'s on May 21st and one received the S.T.M. These students represent eleven states and three foreign countries and come from ten branches of the Church. They will go to or remain in eleven states and three foreign countries, South Africa, India, and China. Eighteen are settled in pastorates, or will shortly be settled, and one will continue post-graduate study on the Pacific Coast. During the past year eleven have been student pastors or staff church workers; two have been teaching and doing pulpit supply; one has been preaching and visiting in many different churches. All but four of the Seniors are married.

During the year nine babies were born to members of our student body and five of our students plan to be married during the summer.

Six students of the Foundation expect to go as delegates to the Inter-Seminary Conference at Miami University June 11-18th.

The John S. Welles Travelling Fellowship has been awarded to the Rev. Herman W. Keeler, pastor of the Church of the Nazarene, Hartford.

Awards for high proficiency are made to the following seniors: the William Thompson Prize in the Study of Hebrew and the Old Testament to C. Robert Avery, Jr.; the Edward Everett Nourse Prize in the three year course in the Greek New Testament to Marie Annette Ferguson; the Edwin Knox Mitchell Prize in Church History to Edna Hope Ward; the Bennet Tyler Prize in Systematic Theology to Marie Annette Ferguson and Howard Leroy Harris; the Chester David Hartranft Prize in the Practical Theology Department to Richard Hyatt Haynes.

After one of the best competitions of recent years, three Porter Ogden Jacobus Fellowships for study in the Hartford Theological

Seminary for 1947-48 have been awarded to Charles M. Bezdek, Jr., from the Western Theological Seminary; to the Rev. Perry Harlan Hultin, and to the Rev. George Paris Gallos, for the past year post-graduate students in the Hartford Theological Seminary.

We greatly regret the going of Dr. Paul Schubert to become Professor of Early Christian Literature in the Federated Theological Faculties of the University of Chicago. We rejoice with him in the opportunity that opens before him and we cherish our relations with him personally and gratefully remember his many services in the Hartford Theological Seminary. Dr. John E. Hartzler, who retires after eleven years, goes with our warm regard to continue his active service in the Church and his work on his Indiana farm. We anticipate with eager expectation the coming of Dr. George Johnston to be Associate Professor of New Testament and Church History. Other changes in the Faculty are as follows: Dr. Elmer J. Cook, after ten years of association with our Faculty, becomes Professor of New Testament and will continue his valuable service as Librarian of the Case Memorial Library; Mr. Paul Ross Lynn, who has been with our Faculty since 1940, becomes Professor in Practical Theology and will be Faculty Counsellor in Field Work and continue on the staff of the Inter-Seminary Commission on Training for the Rural Ministry; Dr. Karl Löwith, who has been with our Faculty since 1941, becomes Arthur Lincoln Gillett Professor of the Philosophy of Religion.

The Practics Department is most happy to say that the President will conduct in the first semester of 1947-48 the basic course in Church Administration and Pastoral Care.

## THE PRESIDENT'S ENGAGEMENTS

In recent months, in addition to many addresses in the Hartford area, President Stafford has delivered sermons and addresses in Bristol, New Britain, New London, Middletown, Waterbury and Veston (Connecticut), Boston, Holyoke, Ludlow, New Bedford and Springfield (Massachusetts), Bronxville, Fulton, New York,oughkeepsie, Oswego and White Plains (New York), Burlington (Vermont), Shaker Heights (Ohio), Detroit (Michigan) and Beloit (Wisconsin).

He has spoken at Wheaton College, Union College, Middlebury College, Wheelock College, the State Teachers' Colleges at New Britain and Oswego (New York) and the University of Connecticut; and at the Ethel Walker School (Simsbury, Connecticut), Miss Porter's School (Farmington, Connecticut) and the Emma Willard School (Troy, New York). He has also visited the Universities of Michigan, Wisconsin and Kansas, and Rockford College.

On January 1 and 2 he delivered two lectures on Evangelism at Doane College (Nebraska), to the Congregational Christian Society of four states. On May 6-8 he delivered four lectures before the Kansas Congregational Christian Conference in Great Bend, Kansas. On March 23-30 he gave the (five) annual Brewer Lectures at Beloit College (Wisconsin). On January 5-10 he preached seven times in Winchester, Virginia, under the auspices of the Winchester Ministers' Association. On May 15 he lectured to the New England Conference of the Methodist Church, in Brookline, Mass. On June 1 he preaches the baccalaureate sermon at Guilford College (North Carolina) and on June 8 at the University of Minnesota.

After a brief holiday in Maine, he sails in July for England to attend a set-up meeting in Bournemouth for the 1949 International Congregational Council, and the Council meeting of the World Sunday School Association in Birmingham. He will also visit a number of centers of graduate religious studies in Great Britain.

## ALUMNI LETTERS

Thöningsen über Soest,  
Westfalia, Germany.

In October, 1945, leading men of the German Protestant Church, among them Niemöller, Wurm and Asmussen, gave a declaration of guilt to representatives of the foreign churches. In this declaration the German church confesses that it had not resisted the evil as courageously as it ought to have done, that it had not prayed and believed faithfully enough and that through us much harm had been brought to other peoples and countries. Hereby the German church assumed responsibility for what the Nazis did. It did not act according to the well known principle, "Am I my brother's keeper?" Although everybody knows that it opposed Nazism and on that account was persecuted heavily, it nevertheless does not resort to the ordinary excuse that it should not be held responsible for things which it had not done. On the contrary, it confesses that—more perhaps than the brethren of the foreign churches know—in the very guilt and atrocities of the Nazis its own failures and shortcomings have become manifest.

Every war with its hatred and propaganda causes a poisoning of the international atmosphere which naturally is strongly felt when after the end of the war the former belligerents meet for the first time. In order to overcome this obstacle at the Stuttgart meeting it was not feasible to elude the difficulties in a polite, diplomatic way. Only full truth regardless of the consequences involved could be expected to restore mutual confidence and brotherhood. This was no easy problem for the German delegation at Stuttgart because the declaration of guilt was bound to become the object of excited public discussion, and many a misunderstanding was to be expected. So I think, the German church cannot be denied the merit of courageously taking up this venture.

At the time the Germans gave this declaration, they did not know how it would be accepted. According to what Nazi propaganda taught us, it was to be expected that the foreign churches in a most pharisaical attitude would accept the German declaration as an affirmation that after all the righteousness of their good cause had now completed its triumph by the moral capitulation of the enemy. This Nazi propaganda thesis still today is having a considerable after-effect. Well, it has not been that way. On the contrary, it was



a demonstration of the reality of the Christian brotherhood beyond national boundaries, how our confession was taken up by the others in a really brotherly attitude. We were overwhelmed by the fact that our declaration moved the others in their hearts so that they spoke words of penitence with regard to their own nations and their share in the general sin and responsibility. It became a community of brethren, united by a confession of sin and by God's promise of the forgiveness in Jesus Christ. The German church could not possibly expect such an effect of its declaration, and I can hardly find adequate words to express our feeling of deep gratitude about this restoration of brotherhood which without any merit on our own part God has given us.

It will be remembered that the restoration of ecumenical connections after the last war was accomplished only quite a number of years after the end of hostilities. Perhaps it is the immense amount of guilt and the manifest ungodliness which after this war showed clearly that there can be no other help but from God alone. Perhaps it is the atomic bomb with the apocalyptic outlook connected with it, at any rate it is an immense encouragement to see brotherly co-operation restored so soon after this war.

There can be no doubt that the root of what happened in Germany lies in the radical ungodliness to which not only our leaders but also the vast majority of our nation adhered. This ungodliness, however, has not originated since 1933 when Nazism came to power, although the Nazis have done everything to propagate it. But it existed long before. In fact, more or less latent, it existed right in our churches where too often Christian faith was without life and people therefore were likely to fall victim to conscious unbelief as soon as powerful propaganda and a change of the political situation would shake and seriously put to the test their weak faith.

There can also be no doubt that this ungodliness existed also in all the other countries of Western civilization. It must be considered as a general disease of the whole Christian church all over the earth. As a potential danger it threatens all the other countries. But I cannot avoid the statement that in our dear fatherland this general sin became manifest in such a horrible and disastrous way as in no other country, perhaps with the exception of Russia, for Bolshevism to me seems to be merely the Russian type of Nazism or Fascism, the spirit and the principle being exactly the same. Well, leaving

aside Russia, I can only ask you to look at Germany as a dreadful example of God's wrath and judgment upon those who despise His commandments. It shows, in a most disquieting way, to what shameful depths a formerly cultivated and honourable nation can sink when it deviates from its religious foundations.

By pointing out the fact that the ungodliness which in Germany became visible so frightfully is alive also in all other countries, I do not for a moment mean to extenuate the German guilt. You may not know, perhaps, that at present this guilt declaration is the main point of our sermons and the vital problem of public discussion. Let me therefore continue by telling you something about the reaction with which the Stuttgart declaration meets in Germany.

Those who actually belong to the church, that is who are Christians, in their conviction agree to it with all their heart. They are glad that now again sin can be called sin. The very pronouncing of this word gives a feeling of liberation and deliverance because too long have we seen the sin of our nation pile up higher and higher but nobody dared call it sin. This necessarily corrupts man's conscience. People feel this and therefore crowd Martin Niemöller's sermons who devoted himself to the task of calling our nation to repentance.

On the other hand, the large masses of the nation who have no connection with the church and the gospel, both among the educated and among the masses, mostly object to the Stuttgart declaration. I do not believe that the students at Erlangen who showed their strong disapproval of Niemöller's speech still were Nazis in their heart. I think that it is rather the unrepenting spirit which by all means tries to avoid a confession of one's own faults. At any rate, it is the vital task of the church to explain to the nation the meaning of the Stuttgart declaration, which has proved to be the Shibboleth of the present time.

In discussions among circles of the intelligentsia one often meets the argument that this declaration would be used by the press and propaganda of the foreign countries as a means of justifying even more harsh measures against Germany. (But, on the other hand, there is not a shadow of a doubt that it will also engender sympathy abroad!) Another argument which one encounters very frequently, practically in every discussion, is that people simply did not know anything about the atrocities of the Nazis. I know that foreigners

are very resentful as to this argument, and when speaking to Germans, I certainly have my counter-argument. Speaking to you, however, I must draw your attention to the strange fact that actually the huge majority of our nation "knew nothing." Fear of punishment prevented people from propagating news about such atrocities they knew of. Everybody leaving a concentration camp had to sign a statement that he would keep absolute silence about what he experienced in the camp. I admit that probably every German once in a while has listened to London radio and that there were rumors about Nazi atrocities. But official German counter-propaganda was not unclever to meet these rumors. So there was a great uncertainty as to what was really true and, in addition, there was the pressure of fear and terror which precluded the facts from becoming known to the public. This terror threatened not only the common man but also all persons in higher positions. In the Nuremberg trial we discovered that even very high officials were likewise under terror and fear. The number of those who actually ruled Germany was very small. One could debate whether it were a few hundreds or just half a dozen.

Also by this statement I do not mean to extenuate German guilt. I wish to point to the fact that this guilt mainly consisted of fear. The conscience of the masses of our nation was weak. We feared them who could only kill the body but are not able to kill the soul. And the result was the death of millions and millions. Here again lies the guilt of the church which was unable to maintain in our nation, as was the case in past centuries, the absolute priority of conscience and honesty and righteousness. Hitler would never have attained power if the clear consciousness as to what is good and evil would still have been predominant in our nation. But once this system of terror was established and more and more consolidated, it became a hopeless idea for an individual person to resist Nazism. Only martyrdom without any practical result could be expected in a situation in which Gestapo with its numberless anonymous agents ruled.

Let me now touch another problem which is somewhat connected with the Stuttgart declaration. Since the capitulation the situation of our church in relation to the whole of our nation has considerably changed. In the year 1945, the masses of our nation were most willing to accept democracy. The horrors of the Nazis had paved



the way for this willingness. But in the past two years things have changed considerably. The permanent and deplorable shortage of food, of clothes, of coal, of electricity, the dismantling even of peaceful industry, the utter destitution of the millions of refugees from the Eastern provinces who live under conditions which are beyond imagination, the hopelessness of the future in every respect—well, all these things have produced a feeling of bitterness and people are asking if these are the blessings of our new democracy. People gradually begin to think that after all Nazism wasn't so bad. Although, of course, today this dangerously growing sympathy is entirely theoretical, it is very critical from the view-point of Christian preaching.

Nazi propaganda taught us that the British and Americans were Christians, very pious Christians indeed. And all the hatred which in connection with the bombing of our cities arose was most cleverly directed against those hypocrites who sang "Onward, Christian Soldiers," and simultaneously burned women and children of our cities alive with their incendiaries. Democracy and Christianity were more or less identified, and this still now is firmly rooted in the hearts of a great part of our nation. Consequently today you can hear the "Christian" Anglo-Saxons being called hard names on account of the intolerable situation of our people. You will understand that this produces an extremely difficult psychological situation for our sermons.

If one condemns the Nazis, one is likely to get sooner or later the answer: yes, but is the "Christian" democracy of the British and Americans any better? The fact that all restrictions of the work of the church have been abolished by the occupying powers (except the Russians), to these people indicates but the affirmation of their thesis that it is Christian democracy which today makes our people hungry, which is well aware of the terrible toll which tuberculosis and all other diseases are reaping, which agrees to the fact that millions of good farmers from the Eastern provinces are expelled, deprived of all their property (except the clothes they wear, but often people arrived west of the Oder river dressed only with a shirt or underwear), and are now inevitably becoming uprooted proletarians in Western Germany which already suffers of unemployment while at the same time vast areas of the country from which they were expelled lie fallow. The church to these people appears

more or less as the servant not of God but of our enemies, and has the duty of calming down our nation.

Even if arguments like these are not uttered, they nevertheless more or less unconsciously influence our discussion. The difficulties caused by this situation can hardly be overrated. We can tell the people what our nation has done to the others, we can speak to them about the difficulties which the Allies face in their efforts of improving the situation, we can remind them of the fact that Hitlerism and not the Allies, in the last analysis, is guilty of the present destitution, we can point to the fact that also in the Allied countries the Christians are a small minority and that they probably would not agree to some of the results of the policy of their governments. In this large field of arguments and counter-arguments it is a hopeless enterprise to begin a discussion. It is not the task of the church in Germany, and it is not my personal task to tell these things to the public of Britain or America or to their governments. The church does not have to take care of the national interests of Germany. We do have to speak about these things to the Military Governments in Germany because they are our "higher powers" according to Romans, chapter 13, and to them we have the duty of being "watchmen" according to Ezekiel, ch. 3. So the church in Germany appeals to the Military Government on behalf of the nation and its needs. Why, then, am I writing this to you? Because I feel that if one member of Christ's body suffers, all the members suffer with it. It is incontestably necessary to Christian brethren, to be informed about the needs, spiritual and external, of the Christians who live in other countries and grapple with different problems.

That is why I felt it my duty to write a few remarks about so delicate a subject as this danger of a new nationalism of which I am afraid as of nothing else. I am very deeply concerned about this present development. To be sure, the Christian gospel, wherever it is preached with authority, meets faith also in Germany although a general revival which we had hoped and longed for has not occurred. There are things which indicate new life in our church and which seem to give its message new authority. But it is very difficult, in view of the situation mentioned above, to say much about the German guilt.

It would be a great help to us, if you Christians abroad would share this concern of the German church as members of the one

body: "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong."

I am, in the community of our Saviour,  
yours, most sincerely,

HANS DECKE-CORNILL.

Nishimuko machi, near Kyoto, Japan,  
February 18, 1947.

Dear Mr. Ritter:

Thank you so much for your postal of Dec., 1946, which reached me the day before yesterday. I am glad to know you are so brave and happy. May God bless you all.

Great changes are going on in this country. MacArthur is much respected and honored—a personality much admired. People, especially young men and women, are earnestly inquiring after things spiritual and eternal. Just the time for the evangelization of the nation!

Our only child is still in Siberia; have not heard from him since the year before last. We escaped being burned down.

I am 77 years old, a retired minister. But I keep myself ready for evangelistic service. Food problem is pressing. But I am safe and sound. Through submission and patience we shall be given times of peace and restoration. Pray for us for the sake of Christ.

Sincerely yours,

KANJIRO NAGASAKA.